

February 23, 2017

Dear Committee Members and Sen/Rep.

I am a parent and I am concerned about the Governor's proposed state budget. Budget reductions over the past year have already cut into programs and services for people with ID/DD and other differing abilities. My son, Michael, is a Junior at Guilford High School and is beginning Vocational work in the community. Please do not cut monies that will support Michael and others like him in their pursuit of gainful employment in the community. I do not want to see my son unskilled and unable to maintain employment. He deserves the right to be employed and living in the community with wrap-around services.

*While we appreciate the funding added to begin to address the residential waiting list, this funding is inadequate to meet the needs of families so desperate for these services. **The Governor's budget does not include funding for new high school graduates.** This denies the nearly 700 students who will graduate from special education programs over the next two years the benefits of day and employment opportunities. There are also proposed cuts to Family Support Grants and for behavioral services for children with complex needs.*

I am also concerned about the transfer of funding for Birth to Three from the Office of Early Childhood to the Dept. of Social Services (DSS). While the budget suggests an equal transfer of funds, it relies on an anticipated increase of \$10.5 million of Medicaid billing to make-up a substantial portion of total funding which may not materialize due to federal reforms. Also, the State continues to move forward with a plan to eliminate the unit reimbursement rate system and replace it with a fee for service reimbursement model. This fee for service system has already been attempted in CT for Birth to Three services and was eliminated as costs grew and grew. This new system could have enormous negative ramifications to the quality of services provided to the children of CT resulting in a significant rise in costs to the local special education departments.

As Connecticut faces an unprecedented fiscal crisis, the Governor and the Legislature have an important choice – to continue business as usual and continue to cut vital services to thousands of the state's most vulnerable citizens and their families or to shift services and funding to the community to ensure these vital services remain available to those who need them. Cost-effective, high quality community based services are a solution to the state's budgeting problems.

Thank you for your attention to this most important matter.

Kathleen DeMino
41 Maplehurst Road
Guilford, CT 06437

